DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 210 021 IR 009 826

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TITLE Library Faculty Development: Needed Now More Than Ever.
PUB DATE Oct 81
NOTE 8p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Libraries; *Faculty Development; Higher Education; *Librarians; Library Automation; Library Personnel; Online Systems; *Professional Continuing Education; *Technological Advancement
IDENTIFIERS *Faculty Publishing

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the need for faculty development from the viewpoint of the individual academic librarian and that of the library. In the case of the librarian, issues of research and publication and continuing education to cope with technological advancement are stressed. The need for faculty development is also discussed in the context of the dramatic change in academic libraries caused by the use of changing and complex mechanisms to identify, retrieve, and disseminate information and the increasing interdependence of the academic library with other libraries and information sources. (RAA)

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LIBRARY FACULTY DEVELOPMENT: NEEDED NOW MORE THAN EVER

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October 1981

IR009826

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LIBRARY FACULTY DEVELOPMENT: NEEDED NOW MORE THAN EVER

A cursory examination of most academic library budgets reveals that the largest investment of funds is not for materials, but for personnel--professional, support staff, and student workers. With this major investment of funds comes a vital responsibility--the necessity for the library staff to be prepared to meet the information needs of its primary constituents, the academic community. How can this responsibility be achieved? By the well-planned and systematic development of that staff.

The issue of faculty development will be examined from two perspectives namely: the viewpoint of the individual academic librarian (or library faculty member) and the viewpoint of the mission and purpose of the library itself. These approaches differ in some ways yet are interdependent in other ways and this interdependency will be explored.

Library Faculty Viewpoint

It will be more meaningful to begin this study from the "micro," individual library faculty member perspective, then move to the "macro" library view. Several advances have been made in recent years by library faculty, the result being that by 1976 approximately 75 percent of academic librarians in the United States had acquired some form of faculty status within their institutions.[1] What does this mean? It means many librarians realized this newly obtained status brought with it a new set of expectations, responsibilities, and demands regarding research, publication, and other activities. Librarians set about identifying their duties and responsibilities in light of traditional teaching faculty expectations and recognized some of the academic librarian's activities are different from those of the classroom teacher. Many duties and responsibilities of academic librarians require a

great deal of time, attention, and often supervision of support staff, which make release time to pursue research and classroom teaching difficult.

What followed was a time-consuming, but necessary exercise by academic librarians to develop comparable, yet appropriate promotion and tenure guidelines for academic librarians. This initial step is fundamental to the future effectiveness of this category of faculty member, because these guidelines must be acceptable to different audiences--the library faculty, the university administration, and other university faculty. Traditionally, the library faculty have been more concerned (and understandably so) on the appropriateness of the guidelines, as they relate to library-related duties, while the university administration, and to a lesser degree, the other faculty have concentrated on the comparability of library faculty guidelines with other guidelines across the campus.

Once this appropriateness/comparability issues have been resolved, the need for library faculty development becomes even more necessary. Library faculty become more interested in competing for grants, research sabbaticals and other leaves of absence, more direct research support (i.e., graduate assistant and secretarial assistance, computer (assistance), and increased travel funds for conferences, institutes, and workshops. Development activities addressing these matters should be planned and conducted.

Because of the faculty status responsibility, the issues of research and publication should be emphasized in a formal library faculty development program. Two examples of such programs are at Ohio State University[2] and Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.[3] An academic library research committee at Ohio State University promotes, coordinates, and publicizes research activities and solicits funds and individuals to do research. A research interest group and research-related activities at Southern Illinois

University at Carbondale encourage greater involvement in research and provide a forum for librarians to discuss and evaluate research ideas. This activity of creating an informal mechanism for sharing research ideas, proposals, frustrations, and achievements is a very practical way of promoting and supporting a vital responsibility of library faculty. This also offers a means of identifying cooperative and joint research ventures, a practice which is gaining in popularity in academic librarianship.

The changing roles of academic library faculty is another reason faculty development is "needed now more than ever." These role changes began with the introduction of automation activities to academic libraries, the most common example being the Online Computer Library Center, Inc. (OCLC). This bibliographic computer and telecommunications system, designed and operated to support resource sharing among libraries, was developed in the mid-1960s, but not implemented widely in academic libraries until the mid-1970s.

We began seeing the traditional and separate roles of public services librarians (reference) and technical services librarians (acquisitions, cataloging, serials, and other "behind the scenes" functions) becoming merged. The automation applications in these libraries create an interdependence of public and technical services operations, hence librarians. Reference librarians are required to understand and apply the automated systems to their service to the library user. Technical services librarians are required to become more cognizant of the effects this automation, and the resulting changes, have on the library user.

Even if all graduate library and information science schools had included the use of these emerging automation systems in their curricula since the mid-1970s, a vast majority of practicing academic librarians had to re-train

themselves to use and cope with these systems. This re-training was primarily accomplished in a continuing education or library faculty development setting.

OCLC is but one example of the recent needs for library faculty development. Others include on-line bibliographic search services using machine-readable data bases, automated systems for acquisitions, card catalog information, circulation, interlibrary loan, and serials control. As these new systems are developed and implemented in academic libraries, the libraries and their parent institutions must recognize and accept their joint responsibility for active and continuing faculty development activities.

Library Viewpoint

Reference has been made to meeting the information needs of the academic community. Basically, this responsibility has been in place for many years. From the library's viewpoint, why should the development of library faculty be "needed now more than ever?" Because the mechanisms and procedures used to identify, retrieve, and disseminate the information to the library's users are changing drastically. A single academic library is no longer an independent, self-sustaining entity in higher education. Quite the opposite. An academic library is becoming more dependent upon other libraries and various types of warehouses of data in order to meet this information need. This increasing dependency of library faculty on agencies external to the academic institution's own library is illustrated by the involvement in regional networks, computer-based bibliographic systems, subject-oriented data bases, and increasingly sophisticated reference tools. All of this means librarians are involved in the information search with far different tools and techniques than existed and were needed a few years ago. The rules of the game have changed and promise to change even more before the turn of the century.

Another type of dependency, other than the library to external agencies cited above, is that of the teaching/research faculty and graduate students

upon the library faculty. Because of cooperative collection development practices, shared storage facilities, and other related activities, a new partnership among libraries is developing. This implies the individual library does not hold all the necessary resources; therefore even the more sophisticated library users can no longer satisfy their information needs independently. The users gain access to information in data bases and other sources by working closely with the library faculty member. This is but another reason for an active library faculty development program.

Information will continue to increase, academic libraries will continue to change dramatically, and library faculty must continue to adjust their roles in order to assist information users and enhance their own situations in the academic setting. Library faculty development is the foremost and central prerequisite to accomplish these goals.

Notes

[1]C. James Schmidt, "Faculty Status in Academic Libraries: Retrospective and Prospects," in New Horizons for Academic Librarians, ed. Robert D. Stueart and Richard D. Johnson (New York: K.G. Saur, 1979), p. 411.

[2]Susan L. Miller et al., "To Be or Not To Be: An Academic Library Research Committee," The Journal of Academic Librarianship, 2 (Mar. 1976), 20-24.

[3]Darrell L. Jenkins, M. Kathleen Cook, and Mary Anne Fox, "Research Development of Academic Librarians: One University's Approach," The Journal of Academic Librarianship 7 (May 1981), 83-86.